

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

January 6th, 2025 at 6:30pm

Chair: LaQuita Henry, **Attendance:** Monique Hardin-Cordero, Heather Jason, Elizabeth Eastman, Justin Dent, Michael Iglesias

Minutes: Michael Iglesias

Call to Order

The meeting adjourned by La Quita at 6:39pm

Adopt Agenda/Minutes

Motion to adopt the agenda by La Quita, seconded by Heather Jason

- A quorum was met at 6:57pm

Call to Order & Adoption of Agenda

The meeting was called to order, and the agenda and minutes were adopted after a motion by La Quita, seconded by Heather Jason. A quorum was met at 6:57 pm.

Updates & Announcements:

1. Minutes Approval:

- Minutes from both November and December were approved.

2. Health Priorities:

- Focus areas for the district include chronic disease management (obesity and diabetes), mental health, environmental health concerns, and maternal health.
- **Obesity and Diabetes:** The obesity rate in the district is 29%, higher than the Manhattan average (16%), contributing to heart disease and diabetes. Diabetes rates are also notably higher in Morningside Heights and Hamilton Heights at 9%.
- **Mental Health:** There is a growing need for mental health services, especially for youth and adults dealing with stress. Speakers have addressed this need, including Dr. Cynthia Grace and Dr. Julie Gomez, highlighting the increased stress during the election period and holidays.
- **Environmental Health:** Issues like air quality and noise pollution were discussed. Fine particulate matter in the district is 9.8 micrograms per cubic meter, higher than the citywide average. Noise complaints related to loud music and parties are common, impacting residents' health.
- **Access to Healthy Foods:** The prevalence of ultra-processed foods is a concern, comprising 58% of the food consumed. The board is encouraging better food choices through awareness and label reading.
- **Maternal Health:** The district's preterm birth rate is 9.9%, above the city average of 8.7%. This presents long-term health challenges for children.
- **Housing and Sanitation:** 71% of rented homes in the district have maintenance issues. Poor housing conditions contribute to asthma and other health problems. Mold and pest infestations, like rodents, are also major concerns.
- **Smoking Rates:** Smoking in the district is 18%, higher than the city average of 15%, contributing to respiratory diseases and cancer.

- **Healthcare Access:** Around 20% of adults lack health insurance in the district, making healthcare access a significant issue.

Presentations:

1. DOHMH Updates:

- Presented by Pauline Ferrante
- **Norovirus & Flu Precautions:** There has been an increase in norovirus cases nationwide. Public health measures such as frequent handwashing, staying home when ill, and flu vaccination are advised. Congregate settings, especially schools, are high-risk areas for disease transmission.
- **EpiQuery Database:** DOHMH encourages the use of the EpiQuery database for tracking health trends. A demonstration will be provided in the next meeting.
- Follow-up: Pauline Ferrante will send out a follow-up email with additional resources and links.

2. Exhale to Inhale

- Presented by Maggie LaRocca
- Trauma-Informed Yoga for Survivors: Exhale to Inhale, founded by a Barnard College student, uses trauma-informed yoga to support survivors of domestic and sexual violence.
- The organization offers free weekly online yoga classes for district residents (36 weeks starting January 15). They also provide scholarships for trauma-informed yoga training and continuing education.
- Their mission is to create accessible spaces for healing, with an emphasis on physical and emotional safety, choice, and inclusivity.
- Collaborations & Outreach: Exhale to Inhale is open to collaborating with other community organizations to extend their services to more people, and they actively seek partnerships to raise awareness and reach more survivors.

3. Broadway Community:

- Presented by Isaac Adlerstein
- **Support for Homeless Residents:** Broadway Community, a 43-year-old human service agency, provides essential services to neighbors facing homelessness, hunger, and social isolation. Their offerings include:
 - A soup kitchen (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday) serving 200-300 people daily.
 - A shelter that operates 365 days a year for 19 single adults.
 - A medical clinic open to all, regardless of immigration, housing, or insurance status.
 - Case management and workforce development services to help individuals break the cycle of poverty.
- In 2023, the medical clinic served 250 people, and the organization continues to provide comprehensive support for the most vulnerable members of the community.
- Located on 114th Street and Broadway, (in the basement of the Broadway Presbyterian Church)



4. West Harlem Development Corporation: Youth Mental Health

- Presented by Wendy Malliet
- Discussed the "Making it Through" program, targeting youth aged 14-25 to address mental health concerns like anxiety, depression, and stress.
- Workshops, social media campaigns, and therapy resources aim to destigmatize mental health and increase access to care.
- Plans to expand the mental health team and create a centralized repository of resources on their website.

5. Critical Response Team (WARM Inc.): Domestic Violence Support

- Presented by Lewis Carter an Outreach Coordinator, and Christina Perry, Director of Operation at WARM. Inc.
- Explained their holistic approach to helping individuals escape domestic violence situations, including housing, legal protections, and counseling.
- Highlighted the importance of immediate action during the critical period of leaving abusive environments.
- Invited attendees to the January 16 general board meeting for more information on their services.

6. 988 Mental Health Hotline

- Presented by Daren Hoke
- Provided an overview of the 988 hotline, a statewide resource for mental health crises, social service referrals, and peer support.
- Addressed concerns about long hold times due to high call volumes and emphasized the need for patience while using the service.
- Advocated for increased funding and public awareness to improve hotline efficiency and accessibility.